

MICHIGAN DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES  
WILDLIFE DIVISION  
**PHEASANT COOPERATORS  
EARLY SEASON REPORT**

Early season reports from pheasant cooperators allow biologists to quickly assess hunter success and local field conditions across Michigan's Lower Peninsula (Zones 2 and 3) at the beginning of pheasant season. This report is a summary of responses for October 20-23, 2004.

Cooperators returned 68 surveys and hunted 425.4 hours in 27 counties during the survey period. Respondents hunted most in southern lower Michigan [Zone 3] (Table 1). The individual counties having at least 10 hours of hunting with greater than 2 rooster flushes per hour were Ingham and Tuscola (Table 2).

Most respondents (68%) thought pheasant populations were down or slightly down from last year in the areas that they hunted, with 20% reporting populations about the same as last year (Table 3).

Hunter's comments on weather conditions were varied, from "too hot" to "very good" for the opening of the season. Many suggested that standing crops and an abundance of grain was a contributing factor to low success. In addition, many hunters indicated that heavy rains during this past spring impacted production. Comments on pheasant numbers ranged from "Great!" to "not a huntable population," with some hunters noting that the population seemed "spotty" or "concentrated." Hunting pressure appeared to vary in a similar fashion, with comments such as "many hunters" and "few hunters." In addition, hunter's comments about habitat quality were also wide ranging, from "excellent cover available" to "not enough habitat." These observations continue to indicate that pheasant are unevenly distributed across their range in Michigan.

Table 1. Pheasant rooster and hen flush rates by zone and year for October 20-23.

| Zone  | 2003  |                 |            | 2004  |                 |            |
|-------|-------|-----------------|------------|-------|-----------------|------------|
|       | Hrs   | Roosters / Hour | Hens/ Hour | Hrs   | Roosters / Hour | Hens/ Hour |
| 2     | 26.0  | 0.4             | 0.6        | 10.0  | 0.4             | 0.2        |
| 3     | 606.6 | 1.3             | 1.8        | 415.4 | 1.0             | 1.2        |
| State | 632.6 | 1.3             | 1.8        | 425.4 | 1.0             | 1.2        |

Table 3. Hunter opinions about pheasant populations.

| Trend         | 2003 | 2004 |
|---------------|------|------|
| Up            | 22%  | 6%   |
| Slightly Up   | 7%   | 6%   |
| Same          | 29%  | 20%  |
| Slightly Down | 19%  | 16%  |
| Down          | 23%  | 52%  |

Table 2. Pheasant flush rates by county (October 20-23, 2004)

| County     | Hours | Roosters /Hour | Hens / Hour |
|------------|-------|----------------|-------------|
| Allegan    | 9     | 0.4            | 0.6         |
| Barry      | 2     | 0.0            | 0.0         |
| Berrien    | 9     | 1.2            | 1.1         |
| Branch     | 7     | 0.7            | 0.7         |
| Calhoun    | 8     | 0.4            | 0.0         |
| Clare      | 7     | 0.3            | 0.3         |
| Clinton    | 11    | 0.1            | 0.5         |
| Gratiot    | 46    | 0.6            | 1.1         |
| Hillsdale  | 20    | 1.0            | 1.5         |
| Huron      | 57    | 1.1            | 1.1         |
| Ingham     | 10    | 2.5            | 3.7         |
| Ionia      | 7     | 1.5            | 2.3         |
| Isabella   | 23    | 1.2            | 1.0         |
| Jackson    | 2     | 1.0            | 0.0         |
| Kent       | 3     | 0.3            | 0.0         |
| Lapeer     | 14    | 0.9            | 1.4         |
| Lenawee    | 47    | 1.1            | 2.4         |
| Livingston | 6     | 0.0            | 0.0         |
| Mecosta    | 8     | 1.0            | 1.1         |
| Midland    | 10    | 1.2            | 0.5         |
| Montcalm   | 12    | 0.4            | 0.5         |
| Osceola    | 3     | 0.7            | 0.0         |
| Ottawa     | 3     | 0.3            | 0.0         |
| St. Clair  | 28    | 0.4            | 0.9         |
| Sanilac    | 32    | 0.4            | 0.3         |
| Shiawassee | 2     | 0.7            | 1.3         |
| Tuscola    | 43    | 2.2            | 1.6         |

